

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
MFA FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

By

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS


IN

PRINTMAKING

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING 2005



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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

Final Visual Presentation

Submitted by Shannon Leah Collis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

GRADUATE STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

I hereby release the following works for incorporation into the University Collections, University of Alberta, as part of the Master of Fine Arts Thesis Collection:

TITLE	DATE	MEDIUM	SIZE
"Tradewind," Variation 1	2005	collagraph wax digital relief	
"Scratchcard"	2005	collagraph wax digital	
"Counterweight"	2005	collagraph wax digital	
"Stasis," #3	2005	wax Japanese paper digital wood	

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: SHANNON LEAH COLLIS

TITLE OF THESIS: FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

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Statement

Contemporary philosophical and psychological theorists insist that memories are constituted of cultural and personal dispositions. Rather than persisting as a fixed record in the mind, memories amount to 'traces' or 'representations' that link experiences with recollections of those experiences. The philosopher John Sutton, for instance, suggests that "memories are blended, not laid down independently once and for all, and are reconstructed rather than reproduced."¹ My work explores the constructive nature of memory and the inevitable gap that arises between an original experience and subsequent recollection.

I am particularly interested in Tony Bennett's visualization of memory as a wax tablet or palimpsest, as a repository "that retains all impressions yet offer[s] itself constantly as a clean surface upon which new inscriptions [can] be made."² The concept of memory functioning as a palimpsest implies a dynamic structure in which recollection is constituted of layers (or memory traces) that are simultaneously in flux and connected. Such an understanding of memory has, in my view, a corollary in the nature of different media technologies. For instance, photography is an indexical trace, an imprint exported into the future. The camera does not disclose the truth since the photographic process immediately produces a gap between the actual experience and the resulting image. In fact, digital representations serve as a metaphor of memory by virtue of being a remnant or trace of an actual experience. And because digital representations can be infinitely manipulated and modified, just as memories can be continually reconstructed, the relationship between reality and representation becomes unstable, if not irrecoverable.

My current research centers on the combination of digital technology, traditional printmaking and photographic techniques. By their nature these processes are well suited to my inquiry into the workings of memory. Through each physical layer and virtual manipulation, the original image remains within a palimpsest that records each past process. As a result, my prints explore states of authenticity, fiction, documentation and manipulation, and how these become inseparable during the reconstructive process. In my work I acknowledge the risk of permanently effacing the original trace and take pleasure in the precarious balance between the definitiveness of authentic experience and the elusiveness of reconstructed memories.

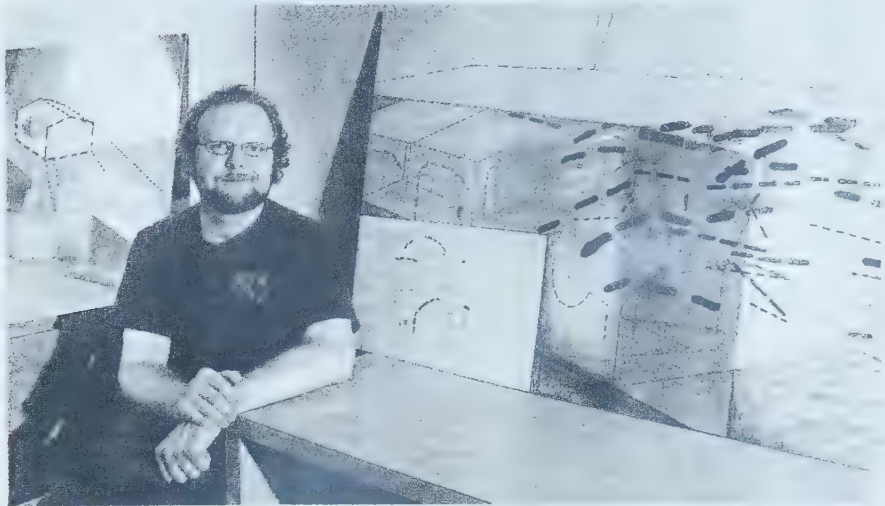
¹ John Sutton, *Philosophy and Memory Traces: Descartes to Connectionism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998

² Tony Bennett, "Stored Virtue: Memory, the Body and the Evolutionary Museum" in Susannah Radstone & Katherine Hodgkin, *Regimes of Memory*, New York: Routledge 2002

Slide List

1. Counterweight 2005 collagraph, wax, digital 42 x 28.5 cm
2. Uncertain Transcription 2005 collagraph, wax, digital 42 x 28.5 cm
3. Fields Apart 2005 collagraph, wax, digital, relief 67 x 58 cm
4. Skyline Vertigo 2005 collagraph, wax, digital, relief 56 x 39 cm
5. Tiers 2005 collagraph, wax, digital, relief 114 x 86.5 cm
6. A Moveable Guide 2005 collagraph, wax, digital, relief 59 x 89 cm
7. Makeshift B etching, wax, digital, relief 56 x 76 cm
8. Codex 2005 collagraph, wax, digital, relief 42 x 28.5 cm
9. The Order of Events 2005 collagraph, wax, digital 59 x 89 cm
10. Marker 2005 collagraph, wax, digital 59 x 89 cm
11. A 299 I.99 2005 collagraph, wax, digital, relief 60 x 85 cm
12. Ungrounded 2005 collagraph, wax, digital, relief 56 x 39 cm
13. Placeholder 2005 collagraph, wax, digital, relief 67 x 58 cm
14. Tradewind 2005 collagraph, wax, digital, relief 84 x 114 cm
15. Scratchcard 2005 collagraph, wax, digital, relief 42 x 28.5 cm
16. Floor 2004 etching, wax, digital 32 x 60 cm
- 17 - 24. Stasis 2005 wax, digital, japanese paper, dimensions vary

Higher education creates high art



RICK MacWILLIAM, THE JOURNAL

Erik Waterkotte uses diagrammatic language in his art (as if you couldn't tell).

**MARC BRISBOURNE,
SHANNON COLLIS and
ERIK WATERKOTTE,
FAB Gallery,
Until June 4,
info: 492-3261**

In order to complete their master's degrees, students in the faculty of art and design must put on a public exhibition of their work. Design student Marc Brisbane and printmakers Shannon Collis and Erik Waterkotte, both printmakers, will show their final projects at the Fine Arts Gallery on campus until June 4. It's a three-in-one experience of quite different work, but it's best to let each of them explain what they do:

Erik Waterkotte

Basically I use diagrammatic language, elliptical forms and perforated lines with overlapping and layering. It suggests architecture, physics or mathematical diagrams.

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A lot of that comes from my father's profession in construction. He built the houses that I lived in when I was younger, and I always played in these suburban areas and new subdivisions with these framed houses, empty transparent structures.

Shannon Collis

My work is made through various processes combining digital and traditional printmaking. I start with photography and then the traditional work adds a physicality to it.

I'm interested in memory and traces that are left in our mind; the remnants of things, layering. Psychologists have a model of memory that's like a wax tablet that melts and you draw over top of it, so you can still see the images of what was there before. It's inherent in the process, and I push that further. I work with wax and use Japanese paper that's transparent.



RICK MacWILLIAM, THE JOURNAL

Shannon Collis explores memory in her work.

Marc Brisbane

There's a style of learning in the faculty of medicine called problem-based learning when working on patient cases, but sometimes their instructors don't have time to critique their

critical reasoning problem-solving ability. This combines my abilities as a multimedia designer and a graphic designer to create a website that uses diagrams as a way of presenting patient information and displaying the problem solving and reasoning all at once.

Inspiration for FAB graduate shows is found in children's books, toys

Prinmakers Erik Waterkotte and Shannon Collis are turning to unusual and not particularly artistic sources of inspiration for their parallel FAB Gallery graduate shows.

Waterkotte's Speculative Arrangements is inspired by primary school math-book diagrams, while Collis's Once Removed exhibit refers to psychological theories of human memory.

"Models of human memory in the past put forward different theories about how memories were retrieved, including those who believed that authentic memory was stored in a straightforward way in the mind and could be called up in

an unaltered fashion," says Collis, 26.

"Contrasting this concept, Freud put forward a 'Magic Slate' theory where the mind was seen as operating in a way similar to the children's toy." (Magic Slate toys were wax-surfaced boards covered by a milky plastic sheet that a child could draw on then easily erase by simply lifting the cover.)

"Freud's view was that the human mind functioned in the same way, allowing us to write a set of your memories, then wipe them away to allow for more memory writing, but at the same time still retain the whole history—in an irretrievable way—underneath,

much in the same way everything you write on the magic slate leave a permanent mark on the wax bottom."

Collis's prints are heavily layered works built up from overlapped images, texts and handwriting samples she's come across in her research.

The eclectic visual sources Waterkotte draws upon for his equally layered and heavily collaged print series include geometric diagram shapes similar to those you find in primary school math textbooks. There are also shapes and forms borrowed from old-style cartoons and more highbrow visual iconography reminiscent of historic Japanese prints.

"I found myself collaging and composing these images together with an aesthetic similar to cartoons or old pop-up books," he says.

Waterkotte, 26, embraces the retro feel of his sources, going as far as to process some of his prints so that they look incredibly weathered and aged.

Some of his prints are even displayed in archival cases as if they were rare documents or archeological artifacts in a museum.

"The work feels minimal, but in reality it's not all that minimalist," says Waterkotte.

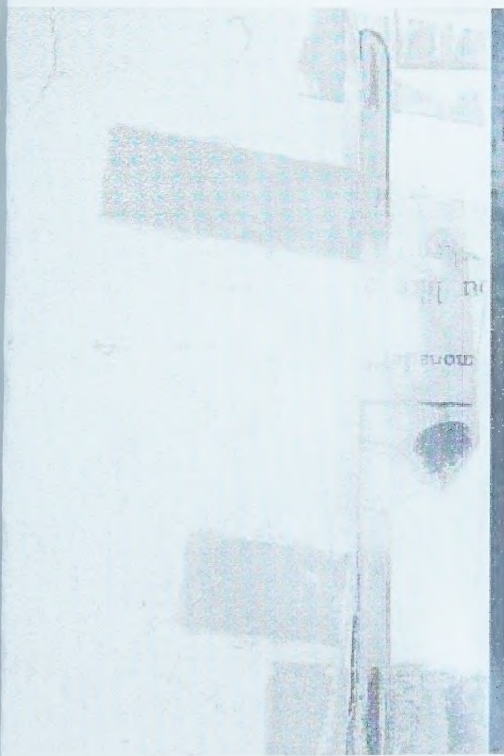
Gilbert A. Rouchard

PREVIEW

Erik Waterkotte's
Speculative Arrangements
and
Shannon Collis's
Once Removed

Showing at: FAB Gallery, 1-1 Fine Building, 89th Avenue and 112th Street
From: May 24 to June 4.
Meet the artists this Thursday from 7-10 p.m.

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